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15. "The novels of Hermann Sudermann: *Der Katzensteg*, and the light it throws on the general theme of his works." By Professor Lawrence A. McLouth, of the New York University.

This paper is a brief study of Sudermann's novel, *Der Katzensteg* (Cotta, Stuttgart, 1886), with reference (1) to the development of the characters, and (2) to the author's views of some social and ethical questions, more or less prominent in most of his works. The numbers refer to the pages of the twenty-sixth edition (Cotta, Stuttgart, 1896). Sudermann and Boleslav are sometimes referred to by the initial letter.

I. *The plot of Der Katzensteg.*—Boleslav von Schranden, son of a hot-headed Polish sympathizer in Prussia, loses his mother early and grows up with little or no training, till the village parson undertakes his education. He conceives a boyish affection for Helene, the parson's daughter; this develops into a youthful love in Königsberg, where they are at school.

Meantime his father, a cruel and dissipated man, forces his young mistress, Regine, to betray the Prussians into the hands of the French. The indignant villagers burn his castle, among the ruins of which the baron and his still faithful mistress live in a state of half siege. The baron's disgrace causes his son to be ostracised at Königsberg; and with Helene's promises to be faithful, he goes to East Prussia, gives up his real name, and becomes a farm laborer. Later he enters the service of Prussia against the French and becomes a very popular officer under the name of Baumgart. He is severely wounded and left for dead upon the field. He recovers.

On his way home after the war he is entertained by his war comrades, in conversation with whom he hears of his father's death and of the villagers' refusal to give him proper burial. A cry of anger betrays B.'s identity. He hastens home. Among the ruins of the castle of Schranden he finds Regine, the ragged, forlorn, hopeless mistress of his father, digging in the castle park a grave for her seducer. He spurns her, summons by her aid some army comrades, and with their help succeeds in burying his father properly in spite of the villagers. Alienated by the traitorous act of his father, his friends then leave him to himself.

He must live amid the ruins till spring, or give up his estate. He and Regine must live together. During the autumn and winter her self-sacrifice, dog-like fidelity and natural beauty gradually change B.'s disgust to passionate love; his dignity, manliness and goodness awaken her pride and finally kindle her love. His former sweetheart, Helene, residing in the village with her father, the parson, a bitter enemy of B.'s on account of the old baron's deed, seems indifferent to B., does not answer his letters. Boleslav has idealized her and thinks that the worship of this ideal is

love. It checks him in his love for Regine, which he opposes as unworthy and base. During the winter an attempt made by his arch-enemies, the Merckels, to involve him in difficulty on account of his assumed name, fails and results in his being made captain of the militia at Schranden by the king. This further embitters the villagers. He sees that, if he remains with Regine, temptation will prove too great. He leaves and spends some months preparing to return with an army of laborers, to rebuild the castle and to reclaim his paternal acres. As he nears Schranden, war with France breaks out anew, he hastens to his post at the head of the militia of Schranden. The soldiers hate him; Lieutenant Merckel mutinies, is struck down with the captain's sword, is imprisoned in the church.

Going home, B. finds Regine fast succumbing to the maddening influences of solitude, disappointment and hopelessness. In his presence she rouses and brightens. He cannot bear to tell her that he must leave for the war on the morrow. The poor thing must have an evening of respite. But the old passion returns. To strengthen his resolves, he turns to the few letters that have come during his absence. One is from Helene, making an appointment to meet him that very night. In spite of Regine's entreaties he goes to meet Helene. He finds her a prudish, selfish woman, who is trying to use his love for her to secure the release from imprisonment of her new lover, the insubordinate Lieutenant Merckel. Then B. realizes that he loves not Helene but Regine.

When he returns to the castle, he finds that Regine has been shot and killed. This had happened while she was trying to escape that she might warn B. of an ambuscade against his life. He carries her body up to the castle park. When he descends to the village to announce her murder to the authorities, he hears the ravings of her inebriate father in *delirium tremens*. The old wretch betrays himself as guilty of arson of the castle and of murder of his daughter, whom he had purposely sent to her ruin at the hands of the old baron. Boleslav returns, determined to bury Regine without the hateful offices of the parson or the villagers. As he prepares to bury her, he realizes for the first time clearly what the poor creature really was. He buries her in the grave that she had begun for his father. The same morning he marches away at the head of his troops, and falls on the field of battle.

II. *Development of Boleslav's character.*—He is determined and brave; for he defies the whole village, insists upon the proper burial of his father, plans to wrest his inheritance from the hands of his tenants, and is a valiant soldier (pp. 52, 53, 72, 79, 85-86, 101, 116-117, et al.). He has a fiery temper (pp. 78-79, 81-82, 134, 259-260). He has a kind and sympathetic heart (pp. 128-129, 132-133, 168-169). He feels ashamed of his father's treacherous deed (pp. 43, 48, 49, 63, 124-125, 266, 268), but is willing to assume such blame as is put upon him. He is patriotic, and this feeling is strengthened by his desire to make up for his father's sin (pp. 42, 46, 47, 49, 223-224).

III. *His feelings for Helene*.—He early begins to idealize her and his boyish love for her. Her face and character he gradually blends with those of a saint, whose picture hangs in the *Königsberger* Cathedral (pp. 35–36, 37, 45, 141, 148, 170, 263). His ideas of his feelings for Helene and for Regine are not correct (pp. 285, 322, 330). He loves Regine, while thinking he loves Helene. His last interview with her shows him her heart and his own (pp. 321–331).

IV. *His love for Regine*.—Boleslav's feelings for Regine begin with disgust, almost hatred (pp. 60, 63, 67, 73). He avoids her (pp. 108, 131). Then his necessity (pp. 73, 130, 131) and her faithfulness (pp. 102, 117–118, et al.) make him grateful. He begins to take interest in her (p. 165), but cannot make up his mind to talk with her (p. 166). He misses her (pp. 169–170). Seeing her often, he begins to notice her beauty. It impresses him slowly at first, and he tries to hide his admiration (pp. 171–172, 173, 181, 184, 190). It is difficult to decide at what point his love first shows itself: perhaps (pp. 171–172), or (pp. 183–184), or (pp. 197–198), or (p. 199), or (pp. 200–201), or elsewhere. But clear indications of love are found (p. 261); it has the heart-beat of a thoroughly human love.

V. *Development of Regine's character*.—Her appearance as a child, her early life, her introduction and career at the castle we see pictured (pp. 54, 67, 180, 181, 192, 193, 194). Here lie the causes of her fall. She is brave (pp. 60, 70, 117, et al.), but sometimes slavish (pp. 60–61, 108), self-sacrificing (pp. 117, 186–187, et al.), faithful as a dog (pp. 63, 69, 108, 129, 133, 136, 204–205, et al.), superstitious (pp. 183–184), imaginative (pp. 206–207), unused to kindness (pp. 148, 173–174, 204), frank (pp. 65–66, 69, 178, 192–193, 255), sometimes stubborn (pp. 257, 259); she feels shame at the past (pp. 67, 175, 193, 258), and has a natural desire to please (pp. 166, 167, 172, 178, 201–203).

VI. *Regine's love for Boleslav*.—At first she looks at him with suspicion, possibly anger (p. 60). Soon her fidelity and devotion are marked (see above). These arise not from love but from a habit of abject obedience and from the thought that B. is her only friend. Gradually Regine and B. are brought together, at first only to be repelled, he by the disgust at the depths to which she has gone, she by shame and dislike of showing him her feelings (pp. 135–138, 145–148, 172–175, et al.). Then his kindness shows its effects on her, in awakening her womanly modesty and pride (pp. 60, 71, 166–167, et al.), her love of admiration (pp. 171–172), and in causing outbursts of feeling, which he sometimes repels and of which she is usually ashamed (pp. 137–138, 148, 173–175, et al.). He arouses her womanliness: she is ashamed of her past life as far as her low ideals allow her (pp. 67, 175, 193, 255, 258). Absence in Regine of jealousy of Helene would place the point of her falling in love with B. later than (pp. 186–188). But see (p. 186, lines 18 and 19). Peculiar embarrassment points suspiciously to an earlier feeling, but other emotions can easily be given as causes (pp. 148, 173–174, 184–185, etc.). But rather strong indications of love are found (pp. 195–197), also (pp. 204–205, 207–208). Or in the last case was it the wine? The dramatic scene

(pp. 243-250) shows her condition of heart. She has risked her life for B. (p. 253). Her accepting him instead of her father would be natural without the factor of love; but her greater anxiety for B. than for herself shows deep affection. But from the scene (pp. 260-261) there is no doubt about her love. Her letter (pp. 283-284), the conversation at B.'s return (pp. 300-302), her emotions (pp. 306-307), her appearance and actions (pp. 308, 311), and finally the circumstances of her death (pp. 333-334) are clear indications that she gave Boleslav the best love her heart had.

VII.—*Boleslav's final consideration of Regine's character.*—Regine had not repented, was even content with what had happened (p. 346). And yet she admits her wickedness, though she seems rather indifferent to its consequences (p. 208), and often shows a feeling of guilt and shame (pp. 137-138, 174-175, et al.). Boleslav had wondered whether it was the obtuseness of the beast or the wickedness of the demon that made her will so strong and her conscience so weak. [But neither of these qualities is strongly marked in the novel.] Now he knows that she was simply a complete and great human being (p. 347). The *Herdewitz* (p. 347) has botched Nature's handiwork; human beings no longer remain one with the *Naturleben* (p. 347) in the bad and the good. What men call 'bad' and 'good' floats indistinct on the surface between what man is and what he thinks he is: the natural lies in latent energy in the depths below. Those blest by Nature may seek light without being confused by the fogs of wisdom and error. Regine was one of these (p. 347). What Nature demands of men becomes to them filth and sin; what human institutions ask seems shallow and absurd. Human feelings are not consistent (p. 348); the good and the bad, the right and the wrong, honor and disgrace are mingled in confusion; God himself is powerless. Dust need not fear dust (p. 349). What was sin, if that which was called virtue, so pitifully went to naught? Where was the bad, when the good became mockery (p. 330)?

III. *Conclusion.*—These words are either simply Boleslav's, or are Sudermann's put into B.'s mouth. The fact that most of S.'s works represent some phase of the conflict between the natural and the conventional in human love, the fact that the closing sentence in *Die Geschichte der Stillen Mühle* (*Geschwister*, Berlin, 1887; 14th edition, Cotta, Stuttgart, 1895, p. 130), "*Sie sühnt das grosse Verbrechen, das sich Jugend nennt,*" almost certainly expresses the author, and the fact that he manages in almost every case to awaken the sympathy of the reader for those suffering under the pressure of the conventional—these facts seem to indicate that Sudermann stands on the nature side of the controversy.

Sudermann himself says he is no writer of *Tendenzromane*, and a careful reading shows this to be true. But neither is he the idea-less, opinionless amateur photographer of human nature, 'snapping' his camera without method or plan, nor yet the dauber of pictured signs to advertise some social nostrum: he is rather the artist in whose pictures of human nature we can see somewhat of his own opinions.

Remarks upon this subject were offered by President Calvin Thomas.

16. "*b* after *r* and *l* in Gothic." By Professor George A. Hench, of the University of Michigan.

This paper was discussed by Professor James W. Bright.

17. "The so-called eye-rimes in *o* in Modern English." By Dr. Charles Davidson, of the University of the State of New York.

Comments upon this paper were offered by Professors George Hempl and James W. Bright.

Professor Charles H. Thurber, of Morgan Park Academy, as a member of the Committee appointed by the National Educational Association to investigate and report upon the subject of college entrance requirements, opened a discussion of

18. "College entrance requirements in French and German:"

a. Uniform units of measurement. Are they possible? If so, should they be based on time or quantity?

b. Elements that should compose a proper entrance examination paper. (1) Sight translation. (2) Grammatical questions. (3) Translation from English into the foreign language. The adoption of these three elements to the exclusion of others would obviate specification of authors and permit free substitution.

c. Advantages of fixed requirements for a definite period of time, say five years.

d. The preparation of a model scheme of entrance requirements for French and German.

This discussion was continued by Professors Hermann Woldmann, George A. Hench, L. A. McLouth, F. M. Warren, James W. Bright, Charles Harris and Hugo Schilling.